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Letter dated 8 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to the letter dated 25 February 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/70/762-S/2016/187).

Azerbaijan blatantly denies its responsibility for the intentional violation of international humanitarian law, which resulted in a large number of casualties among the civilians evacuated from the village of Khojaly.

The events in Khojaly, which led to the tragic death of civilians, were the result of internal political intrigues, a power struggle and provocations in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan continues to exploit the Azerbaijani civilian casualties in one isolated case of the Nagorno-Karabakh war for propaganda purposes.

The authorities of Azerbaijan systematically incite and cultivate hatred towards Armenians, while promoting impunity by failing to bring to justice the perpetrators of massacres against Armenians in places far beyond the conflict zone, including Sumgait, Baku and Kirovabad. Hundreds of Armenians had been killed and hundreds of thousands had been deported before a full-scale war against the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh was unleashed.

I also enclose herewith the fact sheet on the events in Khojaly and Agdam (see annex) and would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

16-03819 (E) 150316

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Annex to the letter dated 8 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Fact sheet on the events in Khojaly and Agdam — Evidence from Azerbaijani sources

For 24 years since the events of Khojaly and Agdam, the authorities in Baku have been trying to put the blame for those tragic events on Armenians and fanning traditional anti-Armenian hysteria through the falsification of history. The events in the vicinity of Agdam, territory under Azerbaijani control, which led to the unfortunate deaths of civilians, were the result of political intrigues and a struggle for power in Azerbaijan.

The true reasons are most convincingly revealed in the insider accounts of Azerbaijanis themselves, both by eyewitnesses on the ground and the organizers in Baku.

Khojaly, together with Shushi and Agdam, was one of the main strongholds from which Stepanakert, the capital of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, was being shelled continuously and mercilessly during the harsh winter months of 1991-1992 with barrages of artillery and missiles.

The daily shelling of Stepanakert from nearby Khojaly took the lives of hundreds of peaceful inhabitants and kept thousands hiding in basements in miserable conditions without water or sanitation. The severe shortage of food, medicine and other vital commodities left no other option but to militarily suppress the death-spreading army unit of the adversary located in Khojaly. The operation on the part of the self-defence forces of Nagorno-Karabakh was a matter of life or death; it was for the physical survival of its population, condemned by Azerbaijan to complete annihilation.

The then President of Azerbaijan, Ayaz Mutalibov, stated that "the assault on Khojaly was not a surprise attack".[1] In an interview in 1992 with the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* he emphasized that "a corridor was kept open by the Armenians for people to leave".[2] However, a column of civilians was fired on by armed units of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan on the approaches to the Agdam district border, a fact later confirmed by Mr. Mutalibov, who linked this criminal act to attempts by the opposition to remove him from power, and blamed his opponents entirely for what happened. In an interview with the Russian magazine *Novoye Vremya* Mr. Mutalibov stated that "the shooting of the Khojaly residents was obviously organized by someone to take control in Azerbaijan".[3]

According to the Azerbaijani journalist M. Safaroglu, "Khojaly occupied an important strategic position. The loss of Khojaly was a political fiasco for Mutalibov".[4] There is also an account by Azerbaijani journalist Arif Yunusov that

[1] *Ogonyok* (magazine), Nos. 14-15, 1992.
[2] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2 April 1992.
[3] *Novoye Vremya*, 6 March 2001.
[4] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 1993.

"the town and its inhabitants were deliberately sacrificed for a political purpose — to prevent the Popular Front of Azerbaijan from coming to power".[5]

Tamerlan Karayev, at one time Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, bears witness: "The tragedy was committed by the authorities of Azerbaijan", and, specifically, by "someone highly placed".[6]

The Czech journalist, Jana Mazalova, who, under the oversight of the Azerbaijanis, was included in both of the groups of press representatives to be shown the bodies mutilated by "Armenians", noted a substantial difference between the two occasions. When she went to the scene immediately after the events, Ms. Mazalova saw no traces of barbarous treatment of the bodies. Yet a couple of days later the journalists were shown disfigured bodies "prepared" for videotaping.

Who killed the peaceful inhabitants of Khojaly and then mutilated their bodies? This is a legitimate question, because the tragedy occurred not in the village taken by the Armenians or on the route of the humanitarian corridor, but on the approaches to the town of Agdam — the territory fully controlled by Azerbaijanis.

The independent Azerbaijani cameraman, Chingiz Mustafayev, who took pictures on 28 February and 2 March 1992, had doubts about the official Azerbaijani version and began his own inquiry. The journalist's very first report to the Moscow news agency D-Press on the possible complicity of the Azerbaijani side in the crimes cost Mustafayev his life — he was killed not far from Agdam in circumstances that are still unexplained.

The late President of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, himself recognized that Azerbaijan's "former leadership were also guilty" for the events in Khojaly. In April 1992, according to the Bilik-Dunyasy agency, he made the following comments: "The bloodshed will be to our advantage. We should not interfere in the course of events".

Megapolis Express wrote: "It cannot be denied that, if the Popular Front of Azerbaijan actually set far-reaching objectives, they have been achieved. Mutalibov has been compromised and overthrown, public opinion worldwide has been shaken, and the Azerbaijanis and their Turkish brethren have believed in the so-called genocide of the Azerbaijani people in Khojaly".[7]

One other tragic detail: it has become known that, at the time of the events under consideration, 47 Armenians were already being held hostage in "peaceful" Khojaly, a fact that the Azerbaijani mass media "covering" the tragedy failed to mention. After the liberation of Khojaly, only 13 hostages (including 6 women and 1 child) were found there; the other 34 were taken away by the Azerbaijanis to an unknown location. The only thing known about them is that they were led from the village on the night of the operation but never reached Agdam. There is still no information as to what eventually happened to them.

In the light of the facts above, it should be put on record that, with a high degree of certainty, the killing of civilian inhabitants of the village of Khojaly was perpetrated by the Azerbaijani side as part of an evil scheme of internal struggle for power.

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[5] *Zerkalo* (newspaper), July 1992.
[6] *Mikhalifat* (newspaper), 28 April 1992.
[7] *Megapolis Express*, No. 17, 1992.